

**MINUTES**  
**COLORADO STATE CONSERVATION BOARD (CSCB)**  
**July 1, 2008**  
**TELECONFERENCE MEETING**

**CALL TO ORDER**

President **Danny Neufeld** called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m.

**ROLL CALL**

**Board members present:**

**Danny Neufeld**, President – Rio Grande River Watershed  
**Pat Meakins**, Vice President – Member-At-Large  
**Jack Swennes**, Secretary – Upper Arkansas River Watershed  
**Leroy Brase** – Lower Arkansas River Watershed  
**Jack Burk** – San Juan Basin River Watershed  
**Mary Sue Liss** – Upper South Platte River Watershed  
**Mel Rettig** – Colorado River, Gunnison-Dolores River Watersheds

**Board members absent:**

**Jim (JD) Amick**, White–Yampa and North Platte River Watersheds  
**Bud Mekelburg** – Republican River, Lower S. Platte River Watersheds

**Staff members present:**

**Mark Cronquist**, Conservation Specialist  
**Callie Hendrickson**, Conservation Specialist  
**Pam King**, Conservation Specialist  
**Cindy Lair**, State Conservation Board Program Manager  
**Scott Shirola**, Conservation Specialist  
**Janette Terry**, Conservation Specialist

**Partners present:**

**Allen Green**, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)  
**Harley Ernst**, CACD  
**Darlene Jensen**, Colorado Association of Conservation Districts (CACD)  
**Eric Jessen**, CACD  
**J.D. Wright**, CACD

**APPROVAL OF JANUARY 24 & 25, 2008 MNUTES**

**Pat Meakins** made a motion to approve the minutes as distributed. The motion was seconded by **Jack Burk**. Motion carried unanimously.

**APPROVAL OF DOUGLAS COUNTY LONG RANGE PROGRAM (LRP)**

**Jack Burk** moved to approve the Douglas County Long Range Program. The plan is the first one to be approved using the new three-year template and is posted on the Program website as an example. **Pat Meakins** seconded the motion and it was approved without opposition.

**HOUSE BILL 1399 (HB 1399)**

**Cindy-Lair** reviewed the Bill. The Bill will distribute interest from funds in the Unclaimed Property Tourism Promotion Trust Fund for state agricultural efforts in 2008-2009 Fiscal year and create the Agriculture Management Fund. The Act declares that funds may be used for Direct Assistance or Grant Assistance for Conservation Districts. **Cindy** anticipates approximately \$200,000 to come through the state board for distribution to conservation districts. However, it will take time for funds to accrue after paying off the State Fair debt. She surmises that funds for distribution will not accrue until near the end of the calendar year. **Commissioner Stulp** and **Representative Buescher**, House Sponsor of the Bill expect HB 1399 funds to be distributed where they are more apt to be leveraged in both state and federal dollars. It will be important to hear a recommendation from the

CSCB as to how that money may be put to the best use. Direct Assistance and Matching Grants have both been discussed as funding areas for the districts. **Cindy** suggested the possibility of creating a “Conservation Implementation Fund” based on the Direct Assistance rating, or keeping the distribution flexible. **Cindy** stated that the fund amount available for distribution to conservation districts will not be a fixed amount and may vary from year to year based on interest rates and Department of Agriculture Management Fund distribution.

**Darlene Jensen**, CACD requested that the CSCB move forward with a joint discussion on HB 1399 between the two boards at the September CSCB meeting to make recommendations to the Department of Agriculture regarding the distribution of the funds to conservation districts. **Cindy** asked both boards to think creatively about districts’ needs and how to distribute the funds to the districts and present the ideas at the September CSCB Meeting.

## **DIRECT ASSISTANCE APPLICATIONS ON THE CSCB WEBSITE**

Following discussion on posting the applications for all the districts on the website, **Pat Meakins** made a motion to post a generic application for each tier compiled from various applications in each tier. The motion was seconded by **Leroy Brase**. The motion was approved unanimously.

## **APPROVAL OF DIRECT ASSISTANCE (DA) DISTRIBUTION**

The process of evaluating 75 applications was time consuming and required a great deal of dedication. The committee consisted of CSCB members **Pat Meakins** and **Jack Swennes**. **Larry Sweeney**, Bookcliff Conservation District was chosen by lottery conducted by CACD as the third committee member to represent Districts-at-large.

The total DA General Fund Allocation for Fiscal Year 2009 is \$391,714. Two districts did not submit an application. Two distribution Scenarios, A and B, with districts identified only by number were presented to the board for discussion and approval. Both scenarios consisted of 6 Tiers based on point breaks in the total score between districts. Following discussion **Mary Sue Liss** moved to adjust Scenario B from 6 to 5 tiers by eliminating Tier 2 and combining these districts into Tier 1. Tier 2 will consist of districts that scored above 200 and Tier 1 will consist of districts that scored below 200. The motion was seconded by **Pat Meakins**. The motion was approved with **Mel Rettig** and **Jack Swennes** voting in opposition.

Adjusted Scenario B - DA Allocation B for Fiscal Year 2009:

- Tier 5 Award: 3 districts receive \$9000
- Tier 4 Award: 10 districts receive \$6591.40
- Tier 3 Award: 18 districts receive \$6000
- Tier 2 Award: 30 districts receive \$5426.66
- Tier 1 Award: 14 districts receive \$2000
- Total Distribution of \$391,713.80

## **PARTNERSHIP REPORTS – Allen Green, NRCS**

Congress passed an override of the Presidential veto of the 2008 Farm Bill. The Farm Bill provides a strong Conservation Title and offers tremendous opportunities. The 2008 Farm Bill will be implemented on October 1. The agency is developing rules for new programs or those with significant changes. The Bill will bring additional opportunities to work with partners and outside groups.

NRCS will once again be looking to Conservation Districts to provide the leadership in getting stakeholder input that will help guide these programs in Colorado.

NRCS continues to work with issues involving the Arkansas River Basin irrigation improvements and the impact of conservation improvements to return flows to the River. NRCS is providing information to Colorado State Engineer **Dick Wolfe** regarding conservation improvements in the Basin. The State Engineer is a strong supporter of conservation and values in-put from producers. NRCS will not provide information of individual nature such as specific locations or producers. **Allen** and **Frank Riggie** attended a public meeting in Rocky Ford to listen to producer’s concerns over proposed rules and information being provided. An advisory committee will be appointed to work with the State Engineer, on development of proposed rules in the Arkansas Valley. NRCS is looking for ways to maximize assistance to producers without creating issues with return flow to the River under

the compact with Kansas. **Allen** encouraged board members to contact him or **Frank Riggle** with concerns and issues.

NRCS has implemented accelerated cut-off dates for program assistance sign-ups. The process allows the landowners and NRCS to more accurately and efficiently complete conservation planning prior to the contract process.

**Jeff Burwell**, State Resource Conservationist (SRC) has been selected as State Conservationist for Idaho. **Randy Randall**, Assistant State Conservationist for Operations ASTC(O), has been called to active duty in Iraq. **Frank Riggle** will assume the permanent position of Assistant State Conservationist for Technology which will include all of the previous responsibilities of the SRC and ASTC.

The Agency will be filling a position called Deputy State Conservationist. Colorado is one of two states to be approved to fill this position. The position is closed and the process to make the selection is underway. The Chief will make the final selection with **Allen's** in-put. .

Colorado NRCS has identified conservation planning as one of its primary goals. NRCS will be working with Conservation Districts to help promote and encourage conservation planning with producers. **Allen** also discussed the feasibility of returning to the use of cooperator agreements with districts as a means to help support conservation at the local level.

## **CONSOLIDATION OF CENTENNIAL AND SOUTH PLATTE DISTRICTS**

**Mel Rettig** moved to approve the consolidation. **Jack Burk** seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

## **PARTNERSHIP REPORTS (CONTINUED)**

**Darlene Jensen**, CACD

**Darlene** thanked **Cindy Lair**, **Leroy Brase** and **Scott Shirola**, for their work on the conservation easement meeting held on Monday, June 30<sup>th</sup> in Rocky Ford. **James Walker**, an attorney who specializes in conservation easements answered questions addressing some of the landowner concerns. The group consensus was that information and education for landowners regarding audits of tax credits and problems are crucial.

**Cindy Lair** commented that conservation districts need to step forward to represent landowners in the conservation easement issues as the issues affect all the state not just the Arkansas Valley. It is important to ensure landowner representation and oversight to protect the districts' landowners.

An oversight commission has been created by legislation to oversee conservation easements. **Cindy** is representing the Department of Agriculture on the Commission. CACD is developing a land owner survey to gather information state wide and is planning to mail postcards about the survey. The survey will be open for a lengthy period of time and will be used to gain better insights of how various landowners have been affected. Currently the extent of the landowners affected by the easement issues is unknown.

**Darlene** thanked the CSCB Field Specialists for their assistance with the 8-digit hydrological watershed meetings. The specialists served as facilitators for these meeting. The meetings went well with good attendance. The landowners in the watersheds were able to express concerns that they might not be able to express otherwise.

CACD is administering 12 Grazing Land Conservation Initiative (GLCI) grants. The grant process closed the end of September and will be finalized by the end of August. Camp Rocky will be held next week and has reached a capacity of 65 students. Many volunteers have stepped forward to make this year's Camp a success. Teacher's Workshop, held at Trinchera Ranch in Fort Garland, was at capacity with a 20-teacher waiting list. A Bureau of Reclamation Grant was received to assist with the Workshop.

The Annual Meeting will be held on November 17-20, 2008 in Estes Park, Colorado at the Rocky Mountain Conference Center. The theme is "Locally Led Conservation: Diverse Districts/Common Goal". The Meeting will showcase conservation districts.

**Pam King**, CSCB

## **District Conservation Technician (DCT) Program**

There are currently 30 positions active with five vacancies – two due to hire of the individuals by the District as district managers. The 2009 District solicitation was e-mailed to all Districts in the second week of June with application materials on the CSCB web site. Deadline for applications is August 18<sup>th</sup>.

### **Matching Grants Program**

The 2009 solicitation was released by e-mail on May 7th and the application deadline is July 16<sup>th</sup>. Because of unspent funds, all of the 2008 Program projects were funded at the \$25,000 level. The 2008 projects were all reported to be on schedule with match in the last quarterly report.

### **Cindy Lair - CSCB Program Update**

The 3 specialists have had a busy 9 months. They have each been available to help facilitate meetings for the conservation districts; attend board meetings; become involved in conservation issues of their region; and to be of service for specific needs of their districts.

A Colorado Conservation Leadership session will be held July 28 and 29 in Glenwood Springs. Communications and planning will be the focus of this session.

Thanks to the efforts of **Representative Buescher**, funding for the Matching Grants program has increased by \$75,000.

Work continues with southeastern conservation districts and several committees to strategize how to best work with the new legislation for conservation easements. **Cindy** will represent the Colorado Department of Agriculture on the new Oversight Committee that is being created to help guide this beneficial but troubled program.

The Salinity Coordinator Position is open and will formally close on July 3, 2008 with the expectation of filling the position in the next month.

### **WATERSHED (WS) REPRESENTATIVE REPORT**

**Mel Rettig** – Colorado River, Gunnison-Dolores River Watersheds

- Gunnison area continues to focus on wildlife and endangered species issues.
- Shavano and Grand Valley continue work on salinity issues.
- Rio Blanco County continues work on energy issues.
- Several districts in the watershed are working on Long Range Programs.
- In general, a “fair” peach crop is anticipated this year.

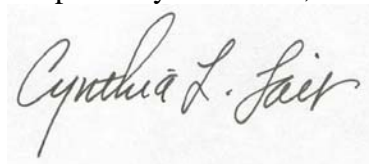
### **NEXT MEETING**

**Jack Burk** has extended an invitation to hold the next meeting in the Durango area. The invitation was accepted and the next meeting will be held in the Durango area. The exact date is to be determined but tentatively late September or early October dates are being considered.

### **ADJOURN**

**President Danny Neufeld** adjourned the meeting at 9:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Cindy Lair  
State Conservation Board Program Manager